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The Influence of Organization Image on Student Selection

Burton R. Clark

Introduction

In studying the student outcomes of college life, it is useful at times to distinguish between the characteristics that students possess when they enter college and the influence of college during the subsequent four years. This distinction stems from the question that is increasingly asked: which is more important in college outcomes - the quality of entering students or what the college does to them? This question has been raised especially by researchers whose work has been stimulated by the ideas of R. H. Knapp and his associates on the undergraduate origins of American scientists and scholars. Knapp and Greenbaum offered an hypothesis of "institutional productivity" -- that behind the superiority of some colleges in the production of scientists and scholars lay their "singular hospitality to intellectual values."[1] Recently, some psychologists[2] have argued for an opposed hypothesis, one of "student quality and motivation."[3] This view maintains that "differential student populations among colleges appear as a more probable explanation of differences in productivity [of scientists and scholars] than the special qualities of individual institutions."[4] In brief, in their view, it is not the institution that is the critical factor

1 Robert H. Knapp and Joseph J. Greenbaum, The Younger American Scholar: His Collegiate Origins, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953, p. 97.

2 John L. Holland, "Undergraduate Origins of American Scientists," Science, vol. 126, no. 3271, September 6, 1957, pp. 433-437; John Darley, speech.

3 Holland, op. cit., p. 433.

4 Ibid, p. 436.

Paper read at the Conference on Selection and Educational Differentiation, May 25-27, 1959, Berkeley, California, sponsored by the Field Service Center and the Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley.

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but the kind of student that the college happens to have.

Research that follows this distinction between student quality and organization character generally assumes that the characteristics of entering students are independently established; that is, independent in considerable measure of the specific nature of the college they go to. Student characteristics are not only distinguished in analysis but are essentially taken as given. Analysis begins with a survey of the attributes of entrants and goes forward from this baseline. Little accounting is then made of why a college has particular entrants and not others. However, the entering student body is not accidentally determined; it is shaped by characteristics of the college itself, as well as by features of the encompassing society. The influence of a college, broadly speaking, includes the attracting of a particular student body out of a much larger pool of potential students. Many colleges have a heavy effect on the character of the student body long before the students set foot inside the doors. It is with this pre-entry impact of colleges on their student bodies that I will be concerned in this paper. I will be addressing the question of why the entering class of a college will have particular characteristics and not others; and with this, the characteristics of entering students will be viewed mainly as dependent variables.

The approach taken here defines a sequence of effects in which the historical development of a college is linked to the make-up of current student bodies, which in turn relates to the on-campus impact of a college. One administrative problem highlighted is the determination and control of student self-selection. Behind this, I will maintain, lies the problem of building and projecting an image of the college. It is also maintained that a radical separation of the nature of entering student bodies from the special qualities of the individual college is necessarily false. The caliber of entering students is an organizational characteristic, one that is shaped by the history of the

college and by the roles it assumes in higher education and the larger society.

Selection by Image

A college may be said to select students directly and indirectly. Directly, it has an admission policy and selection machinery, although the policy may not be clearly stated and the machinery may be submerged in a dean of students office or in the work of faculty committees. Direct selection in short, is through the process of official recruiting and selecting, and is synonomous with what is generally known as admissions and selection. Indirectly, a college "selects" through images held by outsiders. This mode is related in part to what is generally known and discussed as student self-selection, a process usually linked only to characteristics of entering students and rarely connected to sources in the college itself. But students make themselves available to a college according to their impression of what it is like. Self-selection by students is, in part, a selection by public impressions. Self-selection can be manipulated by affecting public images, as college presidents and admission officers well know. A college that desires to up-grade itself can attempt to shift self-selection from one type of potential student to another by assuming a public posture of academic toughness. A college that is unable to draw students from its own state because it is considered too radical may attempt to increase local self-selection by dimming the "unfavorable" local image. But the manipulation of public images in itself is not without limit; behind the image of a college lies its current operational character, and despite distortion and lag, images are subject to influence by current characteristics of the campus. The admission officer attempting to convince outsiders that his college is not really radical has a difficult time changing this belief when high school counselors visit the campus and observe bohemian dress and behavior. Perceived character is

affected by operational character, past and present.

The chain of effects rapidly reviewed above is that the characteristics of entering students are partly determined by student self-selection, that self-selection stems from public images, and that these images in turn are partly conditioned by what the college is actually like.

Indirect selection - selection by public image - may and does substitute for direct selection. Self-selection may bring acceptable students to the college without the admission office doing much more than making marginal differentiations and processing the necessary papers. Organizationally, selection by public image may be functionally equivalent to direct selection by an admission officer - functional in maintaining the college and in supporting a particular organization character. A clientele is supplied and frequently this is student membership desired by the college. This functional equivalence may help to explain how some colleges have become places of academic excellence without, relatively, much of an admissions apparatus. Reed College, which is later discussed, seems an example of this. Elaborate selection work may be dispensable if the public images of the college recruit the kinds of students the college wants.

This functional equivalence holds, however, only if public images of a college coincide with the character that the college desires for itself. The "right" kind of student then makes himself available. If the images are opposite to desired character, of course, the "wrong" kind of student tries to be admitted. If, for example, the image of a college as a "party school" persists, despite the wish of the college now to be a serious place, then the indirect selection throws up the wrong kind of recruit and the work of admissions is made correspondingly more difficult.

The Saliency of Images

Even if the images held by the public are, in their content, all

that a college could desire, it still is possible that not enough students will appear. The number of applicants depends in part on the state of the academic market. In the worst of times, virtually all colleges may find students in short supply; in times of abundance, most colleges will be in favor. But the state of the market is a broadly indeterminate condition for any one college, and in any case it can not be controlled by the organization. More closely determinate, and also more within the reach of college authorities, is the power or potency of the public image. If a college's public image is prominent and clear, the college will likely draw a considerable number of students and may be able to draw a much larger proportion of desirable students than undesirable ones.

The history of Reed College illustrates the role of a strong public image. There is apparently a very high degree of self-selection to Reed. The college has long obtained an academically-promising student body without being able to exercise much direct selection; that is, without there being a high ratio of applicants to students accepted. For the fall of 1958, nearly four out of five applicants were accepted (375 out of 475 completed applications, or 79 per cent). Thus there were narrow possibilities for purposeful selection by the college. But self-selection seems reasonably "accurate"; students who are not academically oriented do not apply and there are relatively few applicants with false expectations. Those who do apply, have, on the average and in generous measure, many characteristics valued by college staffs. In tests administered in the fall of 1958 to beginning students, Reed freshmen scored very high on scales designed to measure complexity of outlook, concern with ideas, and psychological maturity. These students were also very high in cultural sophistication and in interest in world and national affairs. And, of course, they have high ability. How does this happen, with a relatively low ratio of applications to admitted and entering students?

I think this occurs because the Reed image is distinctive. It comes through clear and strong to a national public of professional people as well as to the local population of the Pacific northwest. People know about Reed and they think they know what it is like. Apparently many liberal intellectuals on the Berkeley campus of the University of California, for example, come close to defining Reed as the only liberal arts college on the west coast that is suitable for their sons and daughters. High school counselors in the San Francisco area see it as one of the several places that they would frequently recommend to very intelligent seniors of high potentiality.[5] For many parents in the Pacific northwest, on the other hand, Reed is among the very last places to which they would send their young. The college is typed by them as wild and woolly and possibly very dangerous. Impressions of the college seem to go to extremes. With little grayness, the Reed images cut sharply through the vast pool of college applicants, rejecting very large numbers and attracting a special few who reasonably approximate what the college would like to have.

The saliency of Reed's public images is historically no accident. A particular distinctive character and image has been deliberately and openly cultivated by the college since the day it opened its doors in 1911. The early bulletins of the college asserted vigorously that Reed was to be a college without side-shows, that students interested in sports or social life were not wanted. The first catalog of the college stated:

"Intercollegiate athletics, fraternities, sororities and most of the diversions that men are pleased to call 'college life', as distinguisht (sic)[6] from college work, have no place in Reed College. Those whose dominant interests lie outside the courses of study should not apply for admission. Only

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5 Heist's questionnaire, administered to 37 high school counselors.

6 The early publications of Reed College followed a spelling recommended by the Simplified Spelling Board.

those who want to work, and to work hard, and who are determind to gain the greatest possible benefits from their studies are welcomd. Others will be disappointed, for the scholarship demands will leave little time for outside activities, other than those which are necessary for the maintenance of health."[7] The Reed catalogues and public pronouncements maintained this severe, militant tone for a decade. By that time a public image with a momentum of its own was established. Nearly one-third of the students in the first five graduating classes had proceeded to graduate work. Fellowships had been awarded to Reed graduates by Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, Columbia.[8] Such outcomes were duly publicized. Professors at Harvard and other eastern universities were, according to reports of the college, feeding favorable impressions of the scholarship of Reed graduates into the academic grapevine. Nationally the college became known as a serious, intellectual place. In the Pacific northwest, Reed's "difference" became widely perceived and there elicited much unfavorable comment. The college was seen as lacking athletics and social life, the president and the faculty were viewed as reformers, and besides the college could not even spell correctly (the first president of the college used a "simplified" spelling.) Particular images of the college became widely and deeply established in public attitudes, and the substance of these images have persisted for forty years.

The national and local images have been continually reinforced since the first decade by the college's academic record, which has been publicized by numerous articles in popular magazines as well as by scholarly publications. The college has been depicted in newspaper and popular magazine articles in the last few years, for example, as "an egghead paradise,"[9] "the college where

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7 Quoted in "First Report of the President, 1910-1919," Reed College Record. No. 34, December, 1919, p. 12.

8 Ibid. p. 15

9 Parade, November 23, 1958.

Plato is fun, [10] "a college where learning comes first,"[11] and as a place that is "proud to be different."[12] These articles all stress intellectual commitment and academic results of the highest order. Typical of the detailed comments were these that appeared in a newspaper story: "[Reed] leads all colleges in turning out Rhodes scholars, with an average of one in 82 male graduates"; "the college turned out 132 successful scientists in every 1,000 male graduates, compared to 70 a thousand in the next-highest college"; "Reed and Stanford have the only nuclear reactors on West Coast campuses at present. A senior student built Reed's reactor."[13] With such articles it is no wonder that Reed is now tending to be defined, especially in the Pacific northwest, as a place for very brainy boys who want to major in the natural sciences. One result is a lower proportion of applications from girls.

Images of Reed have also been reinforced by "headline" events, such as the visit of the Velde House Committee on Un-American Activities to Portland in 1954; and by the conduct of faculty and students, defined as liberal and democratic by some and as radical and dangerously bohemian by others. Recently, Reed was among the handful of colleges that refused outright to accept loan or scholarship money for students from the 1958 National Defense Education Act because of loyalty-oath provisions. Reported nationally, in Time magazine for example, this action by the college undoubtedly was widely admired by liberal professionals and added to the college's standing as an avant-garde college. But in the Portland area this action may have confirmed for many what they already knew - that the college is crazy. A Portland taxi driver spontaneously raised this subject with me (March, 1959), knowing only that I was visiting the college. He knew that the college had turned down the Federal money, that the decision entailed

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10 Fortnight, January, 1956

11 The Seattle Times, April 18, 1957.

12 The Christian Science Monitor, March 23, 1957

13 The Seattle Times, April 18, 1957

a conflict between principle and money, and that he and other normal people would have taken the money. He said that principles were all right but only up to a point, the point where money enters.

Reed has tried to be different and has succeeded. Its perceived difference has influenced who applies and who considers applying when approached by admission officers. In addition, the images of the college that are held by its own staff and alumni have shaped the recruitment of faculty and students alike; but this effect is outside the scope of a paper on public images.

The content and saliency of public images of colleges can be studied, in part, by means of the impressions that entering students have concerning the special qualities of their college. In the fall of 1958, entering freshmen at Antioch, Reed, Swarthmore, and San Francisco State College were asked the question: "Do you see this college as having some special quality that distinguishes it from other colleges and universities?" The students then checked a response that read "not greatly different from other colleges," or a response "it has a special distinguishing quality." This was followed by: "If the latter, would you note briefly what you think this special quality is." No specific answers were offered the students. They wrote in whatever they pleased; these comments were later classified and are summarized in Table 1. Several general points are immediately apparent. First, the state college was the only one of the four about which a number of entering students, 55 per cent, reported they thought it not greatly different from other colleges. This is a response one would expect for a heterogeneous, public four-year college, especially when it is part of a system of ten state colleges. In the case of the other three colleges, opinion was virtually unanimous that the college has a special distinguishing quality. Second, the three small private colleges were not simply perceived in common

as good or small or avant-garde. The answers were more discriminating than this, and certain features stand out as components of varied images. One component is "academic rank and standards," or the general academic status of the college: 42 per cent of the entering Swarthmore students, 26 per cent at Reed, and 6 per cent at Antioch reported on this as a special quality of their college; another is serious intellectual atmosphere, a feature quite salient with Reed where it was reported by 52 per cent, less so at Swarthmore (39 per cent), and least at Antioch (13 per cent); but then on a third component, the perceived liberalism and experimental nature of the campus, Antioch had 31 per cent reporting, Reed 17 per cent, and Swarthmore 8 per cent.

An image syndrome of each of these colleges, as reported by entering students, can be summarized as follows:

Antioch - particular academic features, especially the cooperative work program; a liberal-progressive tone; individual and group responsibility, which includes the honor system and community government; and freedom for the individual. Along side the special cooperative program, the freedom and the "civic" overtones of the Antioch student life are obviously quite important in the impressions of entering students. The college is apparently defined by many entering students as a school for liberals, perhaps even as a school for responsible liberals. Less salient in these impressions is the academic rank of the college and the intellectual nature of the campus climate.

Reed - Three components stand out in the impressions: serious, intellectual atmosphere; freedom for the individual; and academic standing. Reed is apparently seen as a place for the free intellectual. Not as prominent as in the Antioch image are special academic features, campus liberalism, and student responsibility.

Swarthmore - General academic status, intellectual atmosphere, and "friendliness." Apparently Swarthmore is seen as an intellectual place of very high socio-academic status. Not so prominent in the minds of entering students are particular academic features, liberalism, and freedom for the individual. Two points are especially interesting: the Swarthmore honors program, which has been and is today important in the academic status of the college, is little remarked by entering students. Second, the "friendly" category, which includes lack of snobbishness, informality, and mature social life, had unexpectedly high prominence. Perhaps this perception of Swarthmore is against a backdrop of some other traditional private colleges that are thought to be colder , a possibility that we are presently checking.

San Francisco State College - is seen as not greatly different from other colleges; with some mention of particular academic features. These included the general education program, a good department in a certain field, independent study, and the teacher training program. Few comments were made about anything other than academic features.

"Good student-faculty relations," it may be noted, had low salience at all the campuses; only at Swarthmore was it mentioned by more than 10 per cent of the students.

Thus the content of the images that entering students report holding of these four colleges varies considerably, with Reed and Swarthmore the most similar. What about difference in the salience of the images? Perhaps the sheer volume of comment in an open-end question partly exhibits this; the more prominent the image, the more likely there is something to say about the college. The ratio of responses to respondents, for the question about special qualities of the college, was as follows: Antioch, 1.8; Reed, 1.8; Swarthmore 1,7; and San Francisco State College 1.1. (Note that the question asked only for one answer, the special

quality). Thus the three small colleges drew about the same volume of comment and this at a level nearly twice that for the large state college. Saliency is perhaps more directly indicated by whether the comments of the entering students were that the college was different or not different from other colleges. The percentage of students reporting differences were: Antioch, 100 per cent; Reed, 100 per cent; Swarthmore, 96 per cent; and San Francisco State College, 45 per cent.

These crude indicators support the supposition that a comprehensive public college will have public images of relatively low salience, while small, somewhat precious private colleges will have highly salient images. Philip Jacob, in his Changing Values in College, spoke of Antioch, Reed, Swarthmore and similar schools as colleges of peculiar potency in impact on students.[14] If this is true, their potency may well prove to begin with potent public images. A close connection between image and impact is likely, as suggested in a 1957 Columbia University self-study. The Columbia study committee was "impressed by the importance of what may be called the identity and visibility of the Columbia undergraduate schools."[15] They proposed that "it is the college with an identifiable and exciting educational objective that draws its students most effectively into an intellectual community and has the most telling influence upon them. Such colleges are generally of moderate size, and have fixed themselves in the minds both of their students and of outside observers for some special quality or purpose that infuses all their activities."[16] The connection suggested here is that the salience of over-all images affects the impact of college on students.

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14 Philip Jacob, Changing Values in College

15 The Educational Future of Columbia University, Report of the President's Committee, Columbia University. New York, 1957, p. 7.

16 Ibid.

While this is mainly an on-campus process, it spills over to the outside. In fact it may be maintained that the images held by prospective students and other outsiders, as well as the images held by faculty and present students, link the very identity of a college to processes of attracting and committing students. For one thing, the meaning of entry into the life of a college in and of itself, is likely to be greatly heightened when the college is seen as something special. Some contact with the Swarthmore campus suggests that for many entering students there the sheer fact of acceptance is breath-taking and promotes a readiness to take on a new identification. These students believe the college is an out-of-this-world place, one to which, they well know, few are called. The Swarthmore public image, especially in the states of the eastern seaboard, possibly has the kind of potency that works on students' feelings and loyalties even before they enter the door. Similarly, at Antioch there appears to be a willingness on the part of some new students to become an Antiochian as fast as humanly possible. The salient image touches personal disposition, perhaps setting in motion what sociologists would call anticipatory socialization.

A relationship between image and type of student attracted to major types of colleges is suggested by work of the Cornell Values Study. Normal Miller, in an unpublished paper on "Academic Climate and Student Values," has shown that entering students at four Ivy League schools are more supportive of civil rights than freshman students at five state-supported colleges. This difference in political sentiment could <u>not</u> be accounted for by a number of background factors; when religion, socio-economic status, regional background, and size of home town are held constant, Ivy League students remain consistently more liberal with regard to civil rights than their state college counterparts. The Ivy League colleges clearly attract students whose values differ from those who attend state

colleges and universities. With this, there is also evidence that the climate at the Ivy League colleges is more pro-civil rights; the absolute and relative increases or gains in liberality between freshmen and seniors is greater among Ivy League students. [From 45 to 68 per cent (23 per cent increase) compared to 31 to 44 per cent (13 per cent increase)]. Miller found one important correlate in the Cornell data of the liberal political attitude, and that was educational values. Students were asked to choose from a number of alternative goals the one which, in their opinion, ought to be emphasized by the ideal college or university. Students in both the private and the public colleges who chose "provide a basic general education and appreciation of ideas" were more pro-civil rights than those who chose "provide vocational training; develop skills and techniques directly applicable to your career." [61 to 46 per cent in the Ivy League schools and 51 to 32 per cent in the state colleges]. There were simply more students at the Ivy League schools favorably disposed to the humanistic values of higher education. Among Ivy League freshmen the ratio of general education to vocational training is 2:1, and this increases to more than 8:1 by the senior year. In contrast, state college students who choose the general education ideal are out-numbered 3:1 in the freshman year and pull up to a 1:1 ratio by the senior year.

These data clearly suggest quite different campus climates and quite different attraction of students in terms of what Martin Trow has previously referred to as cultural sophistication. I suggest that the climates come through to prospective students in generalized, widely-held images and that there is much self-selection as well as direct selection at work here. The more culturally-sophisticated student seeks, or is led by friends and advisors to, the more culturally-sophisticated college, and the Ivy League colleges have this reputation.

Without this linkage of character to image to characteristics of entering students, many colleges would find it difficult to maintain their character. It is highly doubtful whether an admissions office and other representatives of a college could carry the full task of attracting, and inducing to enter, the kind of student who will maintain the campus ethos. One character-supporting function of public images is to attract new members with orientations and dsipositions roughly similar to those on the scene or lost through graduation. Public images have a membership-replacing function.

The Conservatism of Image

While attraction by public image may broadly be functionally equivalent to selection by admissions office, it is inherently more resistant to change and hence a more conservative influence on the character of a college. Admission policy can be changed rather quickly by official directive, but public images once established are more difficult to affect and are likely to respond slowly. Public images are embedded in the attitudes of outsiders and are removed from direct control. They may become in considerable part a matter of community sentiment rather than of rationality. This, as much as faulty communication, will cause changes in image to lag behind changes in operations and in campus habits. A definition of a college as radical can linger in a conservative area or region long after it ceases to be appropriate, for example, if the definition is part of a group consensus and had become a sentiment built into the social structure of the area. The definition may then be only partly amenable to influence by rational argument.

This conservative influence will generally vary, however, with the distinctiveness of the public impressions. An image is a constraint; certain lines of action for a college are enforced through self-selection, among other mechanisms. The stronger the image, the stronger the constraint.

The college that strikes boldly for a highly distinctive character and, with this, for an image that is unique, is also making connections with the outside world that are not easily revoked. We may see this as a dilemma of distinction. The highly distinct college has a potent claim for attention in its professed uniqueness, and, through this, student self-selection may be sharpened. But the college also brands itself in the eyes of the world as very definitely that kind of place. When the times change, the powerful image is likely to resist changes in the nature of the college.

This conception may be clarified by pointing to colleges of relatively indistinct character and which as a result can change more readily. Public colleges generally cannot be as sharply distinctive as private colleges, since they are compelled to react to heterogeneous interests and to take on comprehensive, diffuse orientations. The locally-controlled public junior college is currently the extreme case; it admits virtually all applicants, it offers courses for transfer, terminal and adult education students, and as a "community college" it is willing to try to do something for almost anyone. Its broad, indeterminant orientation tends to produce a blurring of public image. But then with its relatively indistinct character, it is not inherently committed to any one specialty or to a narrowly-based clientele. As compared to the college of distinct character and image, it can change rapidly in a rapidly-changing environment. More easily than the unique school, it can in any order of succession by primarily a lower-division version of the four-year college, a vocational school, an adult center. This is possible in part, by virtue of the multi-sided, blurred public image, one that is cultivated in the administration of some junior colleges. The community-college definition that junior colleges now adopt promotes a diffuse impression of functions; and it permits flexible adjustment to public pressures.

The distinctive private college generally does not want to do this. When it does attempt, or it is forced into, an adjustment to a mass market, its prior selective commitment, expressed in a salient image among other things, will resist the change. Alumni and other outsiders remain identified with the old institution and the old channels of referral and self-recruitment persist. To have a history of distinction is to accumulate such restraints on changes in the nature of the college.

Conditions of Image Weakness

A conclusion of the foregoing discussion is that a fundamental problem in selecting students is the building and communicating of an effective image. Public impressions of a college are the foundation on which the work of direct selection must build.

Note that this conclusion, however, bears on the college that is already, or wishes to be, selective. Where selection is a concern, then the content and the strength of public images are important. The college that would be selective is not interested in relating to a broad mass of people but to a segment, and public images help to cultivate a segment, although not always the one desired by the college. But what about colleges of little or no selectivity? In the public two- and four-year college of little selectivity - in what might be called the mass college - a routinization of college-going takes place. Students may routinely flow from the high school into such colleges, with few hurdles interposed. The social base of the college is very broad and entry is virtually a right of the high school graduate. Under such conditions, the self-selection of students will be much less directly and narrowly tailored by public image. Where selectivity is low, a college has less chance to use images as a way of selecting a membership. If by law or custom the doors of the college are open to all comers,

Table 1. Impressions of Entering Freshmen Students as to Special Quality of Their College

Special Quality of the College	Respondents (in per cent)* Antioch	Reed	Swarthmore	SFSC
Not greatly different from other colleges	0	0	4	55
Academic features (honor program, coop program, small classes, etc)	51	16	9	34
Academic rank and standards (including high ideals)	6	26	42	2
Intellectual atmosphere (intelligent students, serious attitude, intellectual freedom)	13	52	39	2
Liberalsim (progressive, experimental, diversity of experience)	31	17	8	2
Good student-faculty relations (individual treatment)	5	8	17	2
Friendly (not snobbish, mature social life, informality)	11	10	34	6
Individual and group responsibility (honor system, student participation in government, democratic)	35	15	1	0
Freedom for the individual (nonconformity, lack of restrictions, freedom unspecified)	25	33	13	0

*Respondents were permitted to make more than one answer and the percentages add to more than 100 per cent for each college. Each figure is the percentage of students offering that particular impression.

Underlined percentages are 25 per cent or more.

and this is widely known, then it matters relatively little what images the college propagandizes. In any case, it can hardly be an image that the college is only for certain kinds of students and not for others. The college will likely move toward comprehensive, diffuse definitions of itself in order to rationalize its diverse operations.

It is apparently also true that many students go to a college or university with hardly any image of it at all. Self-selection is shaped by many considerations external to organization images and some choices are largely accidental. Even a leading college may, for some, be barely perceived as other than one among many. Swarthmore College, for example, is a college with a nationally-salient image. It has received much acclaim since Aydelotte revamped the college around an honors program in the 1920's; it now draws students from almost all the states (42 states in 1958 were represented in the student body) and has about seven applicants for every student admitted. Even so, a few students - eleven in the class entering in the fall of 1958 - reported that they saw it as not greatly different from other colleges. Too, a considerable proportion of high school counselors on the west coast apparently know very little about the college. Seventy-five per cent of a small group of counselors from whom Paul Heist recently collected some data did not know what state Swarthmore is in; 50 per cent by their own self-rating knew nothing about it; and 13 per cent had never heard of it. No one in this group of 37 counselors considered Swarthmore to be among the three colleges and universities that they would first recommend to very intelligent seniors. The same non-recognition was accorded Radcliffe, Oberlin, and Carleton. The colleges perceived were Harvard and M.I.T. in the east, and Reed, Stanford California Institute of Technology, and the University of California in the west. Obviously the public images cultivated by the other colleges simply do not extend into the consciousness of many high school advisors who are geographically removed. This perhaps illustrates the channeling and founding

of communication regarding impressions of colleges. However, a college image does not need to reach very many in order to do the recruiting job desired. Swarthmore's geographical distribution of students included eighteen from California in 1958, and it is highly unlikely that these students would go three thousand miles to that particular college solely to get away from home. They or someone who influenced them must have had specific leads and meaningful impressions.

The non-image or the image of weak distinction is most likely to exist for complex public institutions, especially for those that are part of a system of colleges very similar in name and purpose, e.g., teachers colleges or state colleges. Here there is considerable likelihood of accidental or incidental choice in the sense of control by image. Part of the routinization of college-going is the increasing geographic availability of college and, with this, self-selection on the basis of convenience.

Research Directives

This paper has suggested that the characteristics of students entering a college are shaped by the college's public images. Public images help to delimit a clientele or social base. Images vary in strength and identifiability, however, and the extent of the delimitation-by-image will vary with the saliency of the image. In any case, the pool of potential students provided by image attraction will condition the work of direct recruitment and selection. Public images are organizational characteristics that are closely linked to student self-selection.

The clientele-defining function of organization images is a consequence of college character that is easily overlooked in research on higher education; it is a basic link, however, in the on-going interaction between the character of a college and the nature of its student bodies. And, this connection is a complex matter in the historical development of colleges.

Needed is research that will identify the public images of college, show how these images were determined, and trace their effects. How can this be done?

One necessary step is intensive historical analysis of a few colleges that apparently have highly salient images. The central matter is to show how such a college built and communicated a desired image, how it was able to start and maintain a "snowballing" effect of better name, better students, better name, etc. Contrary to expectations, this apparently can be and has been done in the face of ghastly financial and administrative difficulties. It apparently entails a commitment by the college staff to an exciting and identifiable objective or style of life, and a dissemination, intentional and unintentional, of the fact of this commitment. There are different specific ways for a college to obtain high status - various goals, programs and forms of organization - but common among these ways is likely to be a distinctive commitment that attracts the outsider and binds the participant. Historical analysis will need to show how the rise and persistence of an image of distinction affected the recruitment patterns of a college over time; for example, in moving from a locally- to a nationally-based student body.

A second research step is the description of current public images of colleges. In addition to the impressions of entering students, it would be helpful to have the impressions of school counselors, especially those in "feeder" high schools, and parents. These impressions may be gained by interview and questionnaire. The images of particular colleges presented in the mass media and in professional literature are also relevant, and since they tend to run to a pattern, they may be readily approached through a simplified analysis of the contents of documents. But it is problematic what bearing these images in the media have on the images held by candidates. In other words, the various determinants of images held by self-selected can-

didates is a research problem.

A third step is to link images to their effects. A general sequence of effects extends from the past and present operational character of a college to public images, to the phenomenon of self-selection of students, to the characteristics of entering freshman classes, and then to the ways that students define and handle their college participation, and the ways they are affected by their college years. Students with different images about a given college may be drawn from different backgrounds and hence from somewhat different styles of life. They are likely to expect different things to happen to them and to want to obtain different things from college. One example would be the very seriousness with which they approach the academic life of the college. It is likely that differences in entering impressions give rise to differences in drop-out, in avenues of participation, and finally such outcomes as changes in values.

Finally and more broadly, I think we need to be sensitive to the possibilities and problems of colleges attempting to build and project images in the coming years - in the decades of mass education. On the one hand, it will be increasingly difficult for a college to be seen as different when there are so many colleges; the meaning of college is diluted when there are colleges and types of colleges without end, and visibility is obscured. In addition, faculty may be in such short supply that an able faculty will not be obtainable and hence will sharply limit distinction. But at the same time, some favorable conditions will obtain for bootstrap operations on the part of average and better-than-average colleges. Most important is that they will be free of student shortage. This enormous constraint on the character of colleges will be lifted for many. More colleges than ever before will have the opportunity to be selective, and with this the chance to be special, to

be precious. That many will be encouraged to attempt distinction is assured by status competition among colleges. An exciting claim of a special nature and role may also be necessary to recruit a decent faculty. In sum, the general need of most colleges that want to reach and maintain a high academic status will be to construct and communicate a special identity, apparently even more so in the future than in the past. It will be interesting to see the ways that colleges cultivate differences, seeking to differentiate themselves from others in the mass market that lies ahead.